

Epitome of Eighteen Histories 7: Sonohara Anri

Episode

T/N: I suspect Mikado/Anri is possibly the least popular pairing in Narita canon. For better or worse, it only makes an appearance at the end.

Original provided by [akeshaa](#), thank you!

Epitome of Eighteen Histories 7

Sonohara Anri Episode

This is a story of the present.
A story of a twisted present.



Raira Academy. Career Guidance Room.

“Sonohara. You’re not furthering your education?”

A few months into her second year of high school.

In her first career guidance session in Raira Academy, Anri received this question from the teacher who was head of her year.

In the teacher’s hand was the survey form for her career aspirations, from Anri’s homeroom teacher.

“Yes... I’m thinking of working once I graduate high school.”

“I see... That’s a waste... With your results, the school could put forth recommendations to even the better-ranked universities.”

The teacher glanced at the staff-use laptop, where Anri’s results were displayed. She had achieved perfect 10’s across the board several times since her first term in the school, and by that alone one could say she was a role model for excellence.

On first sight she appeared to be a reserved girl, but her performance in physical education was just as stellar, and apparently she had received many invitations

to sports teams at one point.

However she regularly turned them down due to being busy with her student committee duties, and once it became known that she was living independently after the deaths of both parents and managing her own day-to-day needs, those who aggressively pressured her to join dwindled.

“Your grades, mm, I don’t mean to be blunt by putting it this way, but not anyone can get straight 10’s. The only imperfect grade you have is in home economics in Term 3 of Year 1... The cooking practical, huh.”

“Sorry, cooking simply isn’t my forte...”

“Ah, that’s perfectly fine. If you can even prepare food perfectly the other students would be in a real fix. Every human should have a flaw or two, really. It’s the school’s job to fill in those gaps, after all.”

With this, the year head asked Anri once more,

“But you’re really fine with going out to work? I won’t stop you if there’s something you have your eyes on doing, but if you’re worried about school fees, with your grades, an unconditional scholarship is an option, you know?”

At that suggestion, the model student in question—Sonohara Anri—shook her head apologetically.

“No... I think that chance should go to those who are studying with a future in mind, with proper reasons. I... don’t have that kind of dream, so...”

“Hmm. Speaking of which. Your first choice is to start working, but do you have any connections in the workforce?”

“I have a dream for the future, in the long run... But I haven’t considered how exactly to go about it...”

“In the long run? Do you mind talking about it?”

The teacher asked, to which Anri hesitated for a moment, before replying, truthfully,

“I want to buy back the shop my parents ran... and open the business again.”

“...”

At this point, the teacher recalled Anri’s circumstances.

The tragic circumstance by which a slasher had broken into the antique shop Sonohara Hall, and murdered both her parents.

“I see... The house you were born in, huh... In that case, I won’t interfere, but if you really wish to start a business, you could try a business college or a

vocational school, too. With this kind of grades you have many choices, after all. Well, I won't pressure you, but try to maintain your results."

Anri listened attentively to the teacher, and nodded.

"Thank you very much. I'll consider furthering my education as an option."

On the way home from the career guidance session.

Walking alone on the road in the sunset, Anri reflected once more.

Her family home was filled with memories that were by no means all good and happy.

But even so—even so, she wished to return to it one day.

Occasionally she would visit to check on it, but it remained unsold, there as always.

Besides the grisly murders in its past, it was not a particularly advantageous spot for a business.

Its value had dropped, but it was not projected to fall further, and it was imaginable that with a few more years it could be bought over by someone else.

—I have to start saving up, at least...

With that in mind, her mind was set on one thing.

—Time to work.



A few weeks later. Wedding ceremony.

'A round of applause for the bride and the groom!'

Sonohara Anri was at a particular wedding ceremony.

Naturally, she was not the one getting married.

The part-time job she had chosen to take up was that of a fake guest at weddings and such events. It was a job that involved acting as a friend or relative at weddings in order to balance the number of guests on the bride's and groom's sides.

It was in a sense a job that existed to inflate numbers and enliven the atmosphere; however, high schoolers were occasionally accepted to act as children of distant relatives.

Anri had seen the recruitment advert and tried contacting the company, and after a simple interview had been accepted.

At first she had thought of taking up a part-time job like cashiering at a

convenience store, but she had felt it unsuitable for one with poor social skills like herself, and had hesitated at worrying Mikado and her other acquaintances were they to find out. It was then that she had encountered this job. Surely she wouldn't encounter Mikado or any of her classmates at a wedding. It might seem like a job that required socialising, but in truth, the scope was simply for an outsider who knew unacquainted with the other guests to act as a distant relative to attend the ceremony, give applause, dine, and go home. It was enough to be one among the crowd, and blend into the background. This was how the interviewer had explained it, and Anri had accepted those terms thinking she might be up to it, if that were all. She, a girl who had no family or friends in reality, could attend a memorable event, receive a meal, and even receive monetary reward for it. The thought that this was a job suited to someone nicknamed a parasite, as she was, flashed across her mind, but there were others who took pride in this same occupation. Then she had thought that it would be disrespectful to group them alongside parasites or herself, and shaken her head. And the truth did turn out to be less simple than that. The crux of this job was one's ability to act as a pseudo-friend or relative to spruce up the atmosphere. One of her seniors at the job had been assigned to be good friends with the groom. But he spoke to the groom enthusiastically, raised his voice without being cued, explained to the groom's family and authentic friends that they were fishing buddies, and even went so far as to assist the reception staff. He took pictures with the groom and exchanged 'nostalgic stories' with the groom's other friends, and even Anri, who knew the fact of the situation, was almost convinced he was a real friend.

—Amazing...

Anri was deeply shocked as she watched her senior at work.

—While here I am, not doing anything...

Now enlightened to the fact that this job was more than sitting in a chair and picking up whatever food was served, Anri began to feel the need to do something as well.

The firm that had employed her by no means expected so much from a first-timer, and had in fact assigned her the role of a distant relative's child, which

involved little contact with the groom, so as to ease her into being in the actual setting—but unaware of this, Anri began to flounder for something to do. It was at this unfortunate timing that some of the bride’s guests approached with a video camera.

“Hello~, excuse me~. We’re making a commemorative video, are you a child of one of Tadashi-kun’s relatives~?”

A man and woman, seemingly friends of the bride, asked Anri this smilingly with a video camera.

Anri’s role as a child of a distant relative, with little contact, was known only to the groom and his family beforehand.

But the friends of the bride were completely in the dark. As a result, Anri, caught by surprise when she had already been growing flustered, froze.

“Uh, um... I...”

At this rate she would cause trouble for the groom.

With this thought, Anri immediately attempted to close her heart.

As usual, she tried to push the scenery before her eyes into a picture frame, to gaze at the situation as if it were none of her business and act calmly.

But for three reasons, she was unable to do that.

One was that she had been taken by surprise.

One was that Saika, deep inside her, was unusually excited in proclaiming its ‘Love’ due to the wedding ceremony, a consolidation of love.

One was that Anri herself—felt envy for the bonds of these people at the wedding.

These various factors stole Anri’s calm from her, and left her mind blank as a sheet.

“Uh... Um...”

Anri stuttered.

Just as she was thrown off by the fear that the ceremony could be ruined by her alone—

A woman beside Anri placed her hands on her shoulders, and leaning her cheek on Anri from behind, and said towards the camera,

“Hello~, I’m Kazane, and this girl is Anri-chan. We’re both second cousins of Tadashi-*niisan*, but she doesn’t take well to strangers, so with all of these relatives we’ve never met before she’s a little nervous!”

“Eh...”

“Isn’t that right, Anri-chan?”

The woman who had labeled herself ‘Kazane’ said this and winked.

At this, Anri remembered.

The woman was one of the colleagues who had come with her.

“Y, yeah...”

She managed to smile and nod, and congratulate the groom on camera alongside Kazane.

“That’s all~, thanks so much! I never knew Tadashi-san had such cute relatives.”

They probably had not had such strenuous demands of distant relatives. Without any show of surprise, the friends of the bride in charge of filming the event moved on to the next table.

“Are you alright? You looked nervous so I tried to play along; did I interfere too much?”

“No, it was a huge help... Thank you very much.”

Anri bowed her head, and Kazane returned with an invigorated smile.

“Your first time with this job?”

“Yes... Have you been doing this long, Kazane-san?”

Anri asked. Kazane shook her head.

“It’s only my second time, too. It’s for an article, so I’ll only be joining for a few more events.”

“An... article?”

“Yep, I’m something like a freelance writer. Right now I’m on an assignment for this magazine called Tokyo Warrior, to write about my firsthand experience with some unusual part-time jobs. Ah, I got permission before doing this, so no worries there. I’m not intending to publish your name either.”

“I see, thanks for the consideration.”

Anri and Kazane spoke in whispers so as to not disrupt the wedding.

“It’s nothing. I actually feel sort of bad, since it’s as though I’m taking advantage of you guys.”

“No, I don’t mind...”

After this exchange, Anri looked at Kazane a little enviously.

“You’re really incredible, Kazane-san.”

“No way, even as a freelancer I’m a newbie.”

“But I think it’s amazing to have something you want to do, and actually be able to fulfill that dream.”

“Do you have a dream for your own future, Anri-chan?”

Anri wavered for a moment at this question, before relaying the same answer she had given during the career guidance session.

At this, it was Kazane who half-shuttered her eyes in envy, as she said,

“I see, but isn’t that fine? I think reopening your parents’ shop is a good dream.”

“But I haven’t been able to sort out how I want to go about it exactly...”

“That’s how things are. Isn’t that alright? When it comes to family, I think it’s just right to be able to feel some kind of connection somehow, not too heavy, not too light. Whether the memories you have are good or not.”

Kazane smiled self-deprecatingly, and elaborated a small amount on her own situation to Anri:

“For me, my biological mother was married to someone else before she had me, and they had a son before divorcing... Which means I have an older half-brother with a different father. ...Even though I haven’t spoken directly to him yet... of course I’m very curious... but I haven’t had the courage to approach him yet.”

“I see...”

“My brother seems to live in such an amazing world, and I find it intimidating to approach... I want to grow out of this cowardice and find out more about the world, you see. That’s why I chose to be a reporter.”

Kazane continued the conversation for some time afterwards, but it seemed she had taken a liking to Anri, as she smiled to Anri as one would to a friend of many years rather than a girl several years her junior.

“I get the feeling I’ll be meeting you again sometime, Anri-chan. Let’s get along when the time comes!”

“...Of course, please take care of me too.”

“Right, I’m planning to start a project to look into urban legends, so tell me if there’s an urban legend near you! If you know rumours about the Headless Rider, for instance.”

Anri’s eyes widened unthinkingly, but she managed to push down her surprise and smile back.

While she did so, Kazane heaved a small sigh of relief.

“But thank goodness today hasn’t had problems.”

“Today?”

“I’ve always been sort of a trouble magnet, I guess... I seldom encounter harm myself, but often I’ve had fights break out in front of me, or people get severely injured... And there was a police crackdown on thieves who were stealing wedding gift money in the wedding before this, it was a mess. And things happen, like this one time some gang boss was challenged by someone from another school right in front of me*.”

(*Kadota’s episode. Not yet translated.)



The wedding had come to a break as the bride and groom had a change of clothes, and in a women’s toilet near the venue, Anri looked into the mirror, and thought to herself.

Kinomiya Kazane was a person worth respecting.

This was Anri’s genuine opinion.

—I wonder if I can be like her one day, too...

With that thought, she recalled their earlier conversation.

Jokes aside, the woman’s ‘trouble magnet’ status could well have come true again.

That was what Anri thought, as she opened the door to the cubicle in the far end of the restroom.

For in that cubicle stood **a woman with bright red eyes, wielding a sharp weapon.**

She was a woman Anri had encountered in the ladies’ by coincidence, apparently an ex-partner of Tadashi’s who had been stalking him.

Convinced that Tadashi was being deceived by his bride, she had brought a cleaver and bottles of acid into the venue so as to ruin the ceremony, and had attacked Anri who had witnessed her making her preparations.

Anri had at once slashed back at the woman using Saika, and hearing the announcement that the ceremony was soon to begin she had immediately used Saika’s control to keep the assaulter on hold in the restroom cubicle.

“Um... Please stop doing dangerous things from now on, and look for another person you can click with. And if you’ve done other bad things before this, please turn yourself in to the police.”

“Yes... Mother.”

The woman nodded with glazed-over eyes and disposed of her cleaver in the trash bin of the restroom.

While unable to know how effective Saika's control was over the woman, this was the most Anri could do.

—What is there that only I can do?

As she sheathed Saika back into her hand, Anri contemplated the matter seriously.

—I wonder if I can build a family one day, too...

She thought this having returned to the wedding's venue, at the sight of the bride and the groom who were now in fresh outfits.

She imagined herself in a bridal gown, and, when she thought of the face of the man that was the groom—

“...!”

Realising what she had just visualised, her face flushed red, and she looked down.

As all this was happening, the actual bride and groom had begun to cut the cake. Anri was smiling before she knew it, and she clapped kindly for the bride and groom.

As though giving her blessings for the happiness of the two strangers, and for their stable everyday life itself, that would serve as the foundation of that happiness.

As though she were just slightly envious.

And today, as well, she continued to be a parasite unto the world. Until the day came that she could break free of her own shell, and take off into the sky.

******EPISODE END******
